

WASHINGTON, DC – Congress's work continued this week as we grappled with the aftermath of a horrific terrorist attack in Boston. As I spent the days in Washington, my mind was often with those in Boston, and also those at home in Montross. When something horrific happens, your heart immediately turns to be with those you love, to be close with those you care about. That is what's truly great about Virginia, our strong communities who support each other in times of need. In the wake of tragedy, we pray for those affected but we also look to how to prevent such tragedy in the future, and how to make our communities safer. Please continue to share your thoughts with me in the weeks and months ahead.

Turning back to the business of Washington, the federal budgeting process for Fiscal Year 2014 continued on April 10 as President Obama submitted his budget request to Congress. While I do not support the President's call for more tax hikes, I am at least encouraged by his willingness to entertain the idea of implementing smart reforms to the autopilot spending programs. Without efforts to preserve these programs, they are set to go bankrupt and changes are needed to sustain them into the future. Our nation's political discourse lately has focused more on partisan bickering than on a productive debate about how to address our nation's out of control spending and outrageous debt. I am hopeful that the advent of separate budget proposals from the House, Senate, and the President represents a larger shift toward real debate and a will to truly tackle these important issues.

On a more specific basis, the submission of the President's budget is a critical part of understanding the funding requests from specific government entities, such as the Department of Defense. On Thursday, April 11, the House Armed Services Committee held a hearing in which Pentagon leaders, including Chuck Hagel, the Secretary of Defense, and General Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, discussed the Fiscal Year 2014 budget request from the Department of Defense. As Chairman of the Armed Services Committee's Readiness Subcommittee, I am fully committed to ensuring that our men and women in uniform when asked to fight for our nation do so with overwhelming superiority. I was also pleased to have the opportunity to question Secretary Hagel on the Administration's proposal of another round of Base Realignment and Closure, commonly referred to as BRAC, which was included in the President's Budget. The most recent round of BRAC, in 2005, was initially expected to cost \$21 billion, and is now estimated to cost \$35 billion.

At the hearing, Secretary Hagel told me that I was "asking the right question," but he reiterated his support for the Administration's BRAC proposal. I continue to believe that now is not the appropriate time for a BRAC round, which we know would be expensive; our defense budget has been cut significantly over the last several years, and sequestration proves to be another challenge moving forward. With such drastic cuts to our defense resources already in place, a

BRAC round would tie up additional funds that could otherwise be used to support our warfighters and to ensure that our global defense strategy is being implemented effectively. Our nation and our military simply cannot afford BRAC at the current time. Many colleagues in the Senate and House, both Democrats and Republicans, agree with me, and I will continue to oppose a BRAC round in 2015, especially considering the many challenges facing our military, including sequestration, the reset of our forces, and the shift of our global strategy.

In addition to legislative debate on the House floor and several Natural Resources Committee hearings, I also participated in hearings this week with leaders from the Navy and Marine Corps to discuss the Department of the Navy's FY14 budget request, and I chaired a Readiness Subcommittee hearing in which Army leaders discussed their views on Army readiness now and in the future. Congress's military oversight role is something that I take incredibly seriously, and I am proud to represent a district with such a rich history of military service and respect for those who defend our nation. With the submission of the President's budget, and as debate over the FY14 National Defense Authorization Act approaches, I will continue to work to ensure that the members of our all-volunteer force receive the absolute best in resources, training, and support.

The main streets of Virginia's First District are full of ideas to get our economy back on track, and your feedback is so important to me as I serve you. I can be reached by telephone at (202) 225-4261, through my website (www.wittman.house.gov), on Facebook (www.facebook.com/repobwittman), and via Twitter (www.twitter.com/robwittman).

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee where he is the Chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee.